

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9714

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSSAG 7AF NKP TH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID AEMR CB VS

SUBJECT: USE OF AID-CHARTERED DC-8 RICE AIRLIFT FLIGHTS

FOR PASSENGERS FROM PHNOM PENH TO SAIGON

REF: PHNOM PENH 4289

1. REFTEL ADDRESSED NARROWER QUESTION OF POSSIBILITY OF RESPONDING FAVORABLY TO REQUESTS OF U.S. PRESS CORPS IN PHNOM PENH FOR PERMISSION TO TRANSPORT AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES AND THEIR THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS TO SAIGON (AND TO UTAPAO, WHICH NOT IN QUESTION HERE AND NOW) VIA WORLD AIR AND OTHER COMMERCIAL CARRIERS INVOLVED IN THE RICE AIRLIFT. THE REQUEST WAS FOR ONE WAY DEPARTURES FROM CAMBODIA.

2. THIS MORNING A PHONE CALL FROM EMBASSY SAIGON ALERTED US TO POSSIBILITY THAT CERTAIN FOREIGN EMBASSIES HERE MAY BE PLANNING TO APPROACH US WITH A REQUEST TO EVACUATE SOME OF THEIR NATIONALS IN THIS FASHION, INASMUCH AS COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTATION FROM HERE TO SAIGON IS UNCERTAIN TO NON-CONFIDENTIAL

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EXISTENT.

3. TO SUMMARIZE SITUATION FOR ANYONE WISHING TO LEAVE PHNOM PENH THESE DAYS: 1) THE ONLY COMMERCIAL CARRIER FLYING IS AIR CAMBODGE, AND ITS FLIGHTS ARE SUBJECT TO FREQUENT CANCELLATION. THE LINE ONLY HAS A SINGLE CARAVELLE AND IT SOMETIMES TAKES DAYS TO GET A SEAT ON A FLIGHT WHICH MIGHT BE GOING TO SINGAPORE WHEN ONE WOULD WISH TO GO TO BANGKOK.

2) FOR UNDERSTANDABLE REASONS TRAVEL BY US-CHARTER AIRCRAFT, WHETHER THE BIRD AIR C-130S OR AN OCCASIONAL DC-8 FROM PHNOM PENH TO UTAPAO IS LIMITED OF USG PERSONNEL. UTAPAO IS A ROYAL THAI AIRBASE, AND THE THAIS ARE UNDERSTANDABLY PARTICULAR ABOUT ENTRY INTO THE COUNTRY THROUGH THIS BASE OF ASSORTED FOREIGN NATIONALS, ESPECIALLY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS.

3) AIR AMERICA FLIES FAIRLY REGULARLY FROM PHNOM PENH TO SAIGON, BUT THESE FLIGHTS ARE FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES, AND THEY ARE UNABLE TO TAKE TRAVELERS OF NON-AMERICAN NATIONALITY. THERE ARE VERY OCCASIONAL AND IRREGULAR AIR AMERICA FLIGHTS CHARTERED BY AID OR MEDTC TO AND FROM SAIGON, BUT THEY ARE NOT FREQUENT ENOUGH AND HAVE TOO FEW AVAILABLE SPACES TO BE OF MUCH HELP. 4) THIS LEAVES THE CONTINENTAL AIR SERVICES C-46, UNDER CHARTER TO USAID PHNOM PENH, WHICH FLIES THREE TIMES A WEEK TO BANGKOK. THE AID MISSION HERE IN ACCORDANCE WITH EMBASSY POLICY IN THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD, HAS BEEN MOST COOPERATIVE IN MAKING SPACE AVAILABLE ON THESE BANGKOK FLIGHTS TO NON-AMERICANS, THOUGH OF COURSE ON A SPACE AVAILABLE BASIS. CAPACITY IS OBVIOUSLY RATHER LIMITED AND PASSENGERS MUST HAVE VALID VISAS.

4. IT IS NOT THIS MISSION'S INTENTION TO GO INTO THE PASSENGER AIRLIFT BUSINESS, AND OF COURSE WE ARE NOT GEARED UP TO DO SO. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE AN INTEREST IN SEEING A REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF FOREIGNERS IN PHNOM PENH, AND ESPECIALLY THOSE OF A CATEGORY FOR WHOSE POTENTIAL EVACUATION WE BEAR A RESPONSIBILITY.

5. ACCORDINGLY, WE WOULD APPRECIATE CONSIDERATION BY THE APPROPRIATE AGENCIES AND COMMANDS OF A POLICY THAT

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WOULD PERMIT US TO REQUEST THE RICE AIRLIFT COMMERCIALLY-CHARTERED DC-8'S TO CARRY LIMITED NUMBERS OF PASSENGERS FROM PHNOM PENH TO TAN SON NHUT DURING THIS PERIOD OF AVAILABLE CIVIL AIRCRAFT. THE PASSENGERS WOULD BE UNDER A PERSONAL OBLIGATION TO ENSURE THEIR OWN PROPER DOCUMENTATION FOR ENTRY INTO THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, AND SHOULD BE PROCESSED THROUGH IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS THERE AS ANY OTHER PASSENGER. ASSUME THAT

THIS WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GVN, BUT EMBASSY SAIGON

MAY WISH TO COMMENT.

DEAN

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NNN

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